

VZCZCXRO3089
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHRL #0076/01 0201559
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 201559Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6314
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNFRG/FRG COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 000076

NOFORN
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO NEA/IPA TOM GOLDBERGER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2020
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [IR](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL USES GERMANY FOR INTERNATIONAL ENTREE,
OFFERS LITTLE NEW IN CONSULTATIONS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor George Glass for reasons 1.
4 (b,d).

1. (C) MFA NEA Assistant-Secretary equivalent Andreas Michaelis told Pol M-C January 20 that the January 18 German-Israeli consultations in Berlin were primarily oriented toward the bilateral relationship rather than the peace process or regional issues, outside of Iran. He described Israeli FM Lieberman as "absent" with regard to his engagement in major foreign policy discussions, and not a major player in foreign policy. Michaelis noted that a major portion of the discussion focused on German-Israeli cooperation on projects in third countries, mainly in Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia, with Israel depending on Germany to provide entree to certain countries. At the press conference, Chancellor Merkel said that Germany would take part in comprehensive sanctions if Iran does not respond positively, preferably within the UN Security Council framework. On the peace process, Merkel called for regaining momentum, echoing closely the USG message, and said the current window of opportunity should be used. She said that Germany expects more from Israel regarding the cessation of settlement construction but acknowledged Israel has taken "important steps." On future events, Michaelis noted Palestinian Authority President Abbas February 1 visit, travel by several key German parliamentarians (and himself) to the Herzliya Conference; the attendance of Syrian FM Muallem at the Munich Security Conference, and likely travel by Foreign Minister Westerwelle to Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in the coming month. Michaelis, the MFA's top Middle East advisor and expert, spoke frankly about what he sees as the need for greater USG direction on the EU role in the peace process. End summary.

Israel Seeks Full Benefit of Special Relationship

2. (C) Michaelis noted that the real significance of the second government-to-government consultations between Germany and Israel held in Berlin January 18 (the first being in Jerusalem in March 2008), was the unique position in which it placed Israel -- on par with France and Poland -- in terms of its close ties with Germany. Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Development, Defense, Environment, Economy, and Education were among those who met separately to discuss relevant themes, notably cooperation between Israel and Germany on development projects in third countries. Michaelis noted that through such cooperation with Germany, Israel obtained entree to various countries to which it would have strained access on its own. The focus of such cooperation is Africa, Asia, and eastern Europe. Michaelis noted one project already underway in Ethiopia and indirect cooperation efforts in Indonesia. In addition, Israel is gaining high status with regard to the EU by participating in and leading some joint research projects with Germany. Michaelis also noted

the bilateral discussions on enhancing German-Israeli educational, youth, diplomatic and cultural exchanges.

Peace Process Not Major Theme

¶3. (C) The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the peace process were not major themes of the consultations. Michaelis described Lieberman with regard to his relevance to peace process discussions as "absent" and not a major player in Israeli foreign policy. He noted that Westerwelle did raise with Lieberman Germany's concern about access to Gaza and settlement construction in East Jerusalem, and raised points from his discussions during his recent trip to the Gulf states. He also expressed concern about the administrative detention of several prominent peaceful protesters who had demonstrated near the security barrier. Michaelis said that the overall main point from the Israeli side was that the ball is now in the Palestinian court. He also noted fairly incredulously that wider regional issues did not come up apart from Iran, such as Syria and Yemen.

¶4. (C) First noting that Germany's solidarity with Israel runs "very deep" in a substantive way, he questioned Israel's strategic direction. He noted that if Israel were to take steps that address the concerns of its Arab neighbors and could move toward normalization, it would not only derive huge security benefits but economic benefits as well. Michaelis indicated his frustration with his view that both the Israeli government and the people are comfortable with the status quo, and asked "Why aren't the Israelis seeing (the current situation) as untenable?"

BERLIN 00000076 002 OF 002

¶5. (SBU) In their joint press conference, Merkel stuck closely to the USG message, saying that it is in Germany's "fundamental interest" that the peace and negotiations process in the Middle East gains momentum. She said that the necessary conditions "are there" and that the window of opportunity should be used. On settlements, she said that Germany expects more from Israel on cessation of construction but also said that Israel had taken important steps. She lauded the leading role of the U.S. and said that Germany wants to be of help within the framework of the EU. She also announced the February visit of Palestinian Authority President Abbas (February 1). For his part, PM Netanyahu called for beginning negotiations immediately and noted Israel's readiness.

Iran and Security

¶6. (C) Michaelis said that PM Netanyahu spent time both at the beginning and end of the consultations to discuss Iran and Israel's view of the Iranian threat. Michaelis said that nothing new was said. He said that Israel seemed to accept the E3 plus 3 (P5 plus 5) process and did not raise alternatives to the diplomatic/sanctions process. However, he did indicate that the Israelis questioned how long one should wait for Russia and China to get on board with new sanctions, emphasizing the importance of just sanctioning Iran. At the press conference, Merkel stressed that Germany will take part in comprehensive sanctions, preferably within the framework of the UN Security Council, if Iran does not act positively. She added that if this is not possible, Germany will still take part in sanctions with other like-minded countries. Netanyahu characterized Iran as a tyranny and called for imposing tough sanctions now.

Upcoming Visits/Travel

¶7. (SBU) Michaelis noted that he and several prominent German parliamentarians would travel to the Herzliya Conference in Israel. He noted that he had also briefed

these parliamentarians as preparation for their trip. They include: former Foreign Minister and current Social Democratic Party (SPD) caucus leader Frank-Walter Steinmeier, SPD Secretary General Andrea Nahles, Chair of the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee Ruprecht Polenz (Christian Democratic Union - CDU), and Volker Beck (Greens). Aside from President Abbas visiting Berlin February 1, Syrian FM Muallem will attend the Munich Security Conference, and FM Westerwelle plans to visit Egypt, Jordan and Syria in the next month.

Comment

18. (C/NF) Acknowledging that the consultations results were thin on substance regarding foreign policy, Michaelis said that the focus on the bilateral relationship was expected. He stressed that the consultations were meant to further bilateral relations between the two countries. Michaelis, perhaps Germany's top Middle East advisor, also used the meeting to speak frankly about EU-US cooperation and coordination on Middle East issues. He noted that the Quint would be meeting in Berlin on January 22, (Italy, France, Spain, Germany, the UK and Marc Otte of the EU) to discuss the peace process and how the EU could be helpful to the U.S. in its efforts. Michaelis said that the EU is not clear on what it can do concretely to contribute to the U.S. efforts. He expressed the view that it would be helpful if the U.S. were to think along the lines of a division of roles (U.S., EU) and very concrete tasks to address our common goals. He said that this might be particularly useful in dealing with the PA.

MURPHY